



Veterans *first*

Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs

Commissioner's Note

May 2012

TDVA continues to move forward in serving those who served our state and country. The second quarter was filled with milestones of positive change, but we also experienced tremendous loss.

Our First Annual Women Veterans Summit on April 28 was a resounding success and the beginning of an exciting new tradition for Tennessee. We plan to make it a bigger networking and educational event every year.

Governor Haslam's TEAM Act was approved by the General Assembly, giving Veterans preference in applying and interviewing for open state positions and promotions. You can find more on that and many other topics, by visiting our newly redesigned website at www.tn.gov/veteran.

I had the privilege of traveling with three incredible World War II Veterans in May for the Music City's Honor Flight to Washington, D.C.. You can also meet Eugene "Gene" Rhue, Talmadge Roy "Woody" Woodall, and Nathaniel "Barney" Johnson, Jr. by watching their interviews on our new youtube page, [TDVAServe](#).

In March, Governor Haslam and I posthumously awarded the first Tennessee Fallen Heroes Medal to [Sergeant First Class Dennis Murray of Red Boiling Springs, TN](#). His mother Wanda Maxey received the medal on her son's behalf. The body of Private First Class Frank Jennings also came home in April, after being missing for nearly 62 years. Specialist Jason Edens of Franklin and Sergeant Jacob Schwallie of Clarksville were both killed in action in May.

On May 24, [Governor Haslam](#), Command Sergeant Major George Holland and I memorialized our Tennessee service members killed or returned for burial in 2011 and 2012. [For the first time](#), we invited the families of our fallen heroes to receive a presentation from the state in honor of their loved one. It was a moving ceremony and a respectful way to start the Memorial Day weekend.

Our beautiful State Veterans Cemeteries also provided the perfect backdrop for several Memorial Day events.

The second quarter is nearly finished and we are looking forward to a new fiscal year and an exciting third quarter.



TDVA Commissioner Many-Bears
Grinder

FIRST ANNUAL WOMEN VETERANS SUMMIT 2012

By Julie Cyr, Women Veterans Coordinator

April 28, 2012, the Tennessee Department of Veterans hosted the First Annual Women Veterans Summit. The inaugural event was co-sponsored by the Women Veterans of America Chapter 20.



More than 145 attendees heard from several guest speakers including U.S. Congressman Diane Black, Betty Moseley Brown, Ed.D., Associate Director of the Center for Women Veterans, Brigadier General (ret) Wilma Vaught, President of the Board of Directors of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, and Mary Ross, National Commander for Women Veterans of America. Informational workshops were offered as well.

Country music legend Lee Greenwood performed "God Bless the USA" which brought attendees to their feet.

Women Veterans of America National Commander Mary Ross was named Tennessee's First Woman Veteran of the Year. After 20 years of service in the United States Army, Ross has dedicated her life to serving veterans to include her current role as Deputy Executive Director for Operation Stand Down Nashville, Inc.



First Woman Veteran of the Year
Mary Ross

Several women were recognized for their military service, including 101 year-old Laura Rhodes who was believed to be the state's oldest living female Veteran. Sadly, Ms. Rhodes passed away in May, just a few weeks after her appearance at the Women Veterans Summit.

The networking event helped women veterans find support and learn about valuable resources and services from vendors such as NAMI, OSDN and eBenefits.

Keep a lookout details on next year's summit coming in April 2013.

For more pictures, video from the event and to view the presentations offered go to our [Women Veterans link](#).



101 year-old Laura Rhodes
attended as oldest female
veteran

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY 2012

During this year's legislative session, TDVA followed more than 70 proposed bills with a focus on Veterans. These bills included highway sign dedications, joint resolutions to honor soldiers who passed way, specialty plates and improvements to the state's hiring process. The majority of the 70 bills passed legislation.

Among the new laws are a designated Tennessee National Guard Day, early registration for combat Veterans, and unemployment benefits for relocated military spouses.

For more information visit our [State Benefits](#) page.

LOOK FOR CHANGES



For fiscal year 2012-2013, TDVA will receive \$5.5 million from the state's capital improvement budget for improvements at Tennessee's four State Veterans Cemeteries.

Look for new crypts, new columbariums and a self service kiosk that would allow families to type in the name of an interred Veteran and print out a map to the appropriate plot.

Governor Bill Haslam's approved budget also included \$23 million towards building a new Tennessee State Veterans Home in Bradley County.

TDVA SPOTLIGHT

Tennessee State Veterans Home Receives and Retains 5 Star Rating

The Tennessee State Veterans Home in Murfreesboro received a 5 star rating and has been named Best of the Best in the state for 2012 by U.S. News and World Report . A facility's overall rating is reflective of its performance in health inspections, nurse staffing, and medical care. Homes are ranked in tiers according to their star ratings in the three individual areas.



TSVH in Murfreesboro received a landscaping makeover from Keller Williams Realty in May

Serving with Excellence and Compassion

The Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs is committed to serving veterans and their families with compassion and dignity. The needs of our veterans span federal claims, education, housing, employment and at times the needs can become extraordinary. TDVA would like to recognize County Service Officer Lee Brame for his persistence to ensure a Claiborne County Veteran received treatment to prevent suicide. Brame's attentiveness, commitment and compassion saved a veterans life, connected the service member with ongoing medical treatment and a job. Brame was presented with a certificate of achievement and a coin from TDVA Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder.

During the previous year, Brame attended quarterly TDVA training which included instructions on suicide prevention.

Award Winning TDVA Employees

Although our TDVA team is small, we are proud of our dedicated TDVA employees who continue to raise the bar on serving our veterans with excellence.

- ◆ Ida Wade at the West Tennessee Veterans Cemetery has received the state service award for 20 years of service as of February.
 - ◆ John Walden will receive the state service award for 5 years of service in June
- Congratulations to Ida and John for their continued commitment.

WHAT'S NEW WITH TDVA?

New TDVA Employees

It is our pleasure to welcome five new employees to the TDVA family.

- ◆ Yvette Martinez transferred to TDVA on March 12 as Assistant Commissioner of Outreach and Communications
- ◆ Bradley Brad Ferrar started on March 16 as a secretary at the Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery in Nashville.
- ◆ William Tommy Tomlinson came on board on April 2 as a Veterans Benefits Representative-1 at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center Nashville.
- ◆ Jacquelyn "Jackie" Lewis joined us on April 9 as a Veterans Benefits Representative-1 in our Chattanooga Field Office.
- ◆ David Junquist started on April 9 as a Veterans Benefits Representative-3 in our Dickson Field Office.

New Specialty Plate to Support New State Veterans Homes



Pre-orders for a specialty plate that proclaims support of Veterans are on sale now to raise funds in support of State Veterans Homes in Bradley and Montgomery counties. Purchasers do not have to be Veterans. The \$35 fee is in addition to the annual vehicle registration cost and does not apply to wheel taxes or other county fees. Half the money raised from plate sales will support the two state Veterans homes. 40 percent of the remaining funds will go to Tennessee Arts Programs and 10 percent to the Tennessee Highway Fund. Once 1,000 orders have been received, a check for \$35,000 will be written to the Tennessee Department of Revenue to begin producing the new specialty plates.

To Pre-Order in Bradley County

Orders may be sent to 155 Ocoee St., Room 1, Cleveland, TN 37311, and should include name, address, county, phone number, email address and number of plates. Checks should be made payable to the Southeast Tennessee Veterans Home Council in the amount of \$35 for each plate requested. Orders also may be made at the Bradley County Veterans Affairs Office at the courthouse.

To Pre-Order in Montgomery County

Checks should be made payable to the District 6-VFW, 1350 Dr. Meade Lane, Clarksville, TN 37042. Checks should be accompanied with name, address, county, phone number, email address and number of plates requested.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ June 5, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. (CDT)-Senator Bob Corker's Rally Point Event at Jackson State Community College, Jackson
- ◆ June 13, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. (CDT)-Senator Bob Corker's Rally Point Event at the Leslie Town Center, Cookeville
- ◆ June 30, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (EDT)-Vietnam Veterans Homecoming Event, Johnson City
- ◆ July 18, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (CDT)-Five County Outreach Event, Carthage

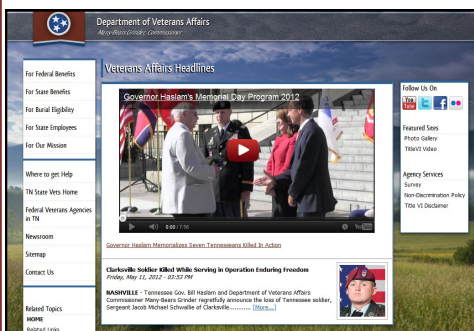
For more TDVA events, visit our events page at www.tn.gov/veteran.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

In April, TDVA Commissioner Many-Bears Grinder joined Mrs. Holly Patreaus, Director of the Office of Member Affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau for two days of town hall meetings with active duty personnel, family members, veterans and civilian employees. Discussions at the NSA Mid-South Conference Center in Millington, covered scams focused on military personnel and veterans, as well as basic consumer protection and financial resources.



STAY CONNECTED WITH TDVA



Real time TDVA updates are now available through several different resources.

In May, we redesigned our TDVA website to better serve our Veterans and their families. To take the tour of the new website visit www.tn.gov/veteran and find out more about new state benefits, TDVA events, news, TDVA job openings and contact information.



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Watch TDVA videos on our new Youtube channel [TDVAServe](https://www.youtube.com/TDVAServe)



TDVA mailing address

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Pass It On

There are nearly 500,000 veterans and 1.5 million family members in the state of Tennessee. Help us to reach your friends and family with the latest news on benefits, resources and events, by passing on the many ways to reach TDVA.